

# Down syndrome and abortion.



## **If we vote yes, will abortion be allowed in Ireland just because the growing baby might have Down syndrome?**

No. The proposed legislation will only allow abortion for particular reasons during a restricted period in early pregnancy and under the care of a doctor. After this point, women will only be able to access abortion care if their health or life is at risk, or if the developing baby is diagnosed with a condition that is incompatible with life. The proposed legislation will not allow disability as a reason for abortion.

### **At present**

Most women decide not to have their pregnancy screened for disability. Some women, particularly if they are in a high risk group, will seek screening privately during early pregnancy. Some may also be alerted to an increased chance of Down syndrome at their 20 week scan. No screening can give a diagnosis of down syndrome and must always be combined with additional diagnostic tests. When a woman receives a diagnosis of Down syndrome, she may continue her pregnancy and the diagnosis allows the family to prepare for the care of a child with special needs. Some families who get a diagnosis of Down syndrome during pregnancy decide to have an abortion abroad.

### **If the public vote yes**

There will be no provision for abortion in Ireland on the basis of a diagnosis of non-fatal disability, like Down syndrome. As is currently the case, some women, particularly if they are at higher risk, will seek screening privately in early pregnancy or if they are alerted during their 20 week scan, and may decide to end their pregnancies abroad if a diagnosis of Down syndrome is confirmed by further tests.

It is never possible to fully appreciate the personal circumstances of another woman or family when it comes to a decision such as this. The majority of women seeking abortion care already have one or more children. Whatever decision she makes is considered and thoughtful and takes into account the well-being of all of her family.

Prejudice and discrimination against people with disabilities is a societal issue and should not be used as a reason for denying suitable, compassionate healthcare for all women and families in Ireland.